

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 BUENOS 03190 081829 Z

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ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PASS-00 ARA-10 H-02 /013 W

----- 006837

P 081600 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1950

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 3190

FOR: JOHN R. COOPER.

813 SOUTH RACE

EL DORADO, KANSAS 67042.

TEL. NO. (316) 321-3229.

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CDES, AR (COOPER, JOHN HARRISON, AND

JOHNSON, JANET MAE.)

SUBJECT: OBIT/SCS: PRESUMPTIVE DEATHS DURING MOUNTAIN CLIMB.

1. REGARDING PRESUMED DEATH OF YOUR SON, JOHN HARRISON COOPER, AMERICAN EMBASSY, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, HEREBY PROVIDES FOLLOWING INFORMATION RESULTING FROM CONSULAR OFFICER' S VISIT TO MENDOZA MAY 2 TO 4. NOTE IN PARTICULAR PARAGRAPHS 6 THROUGH 10.

2. OFFICER IN CHARGE OF CASE IS POLICE INSPECTOR GENERAL RAMON A. ARRIETA RPT ARRIETA, DEPARTAMENTO CENTRAL DE POLICIA, MENDOZA. ON BASIS HIS INVESTIGATION, HE PLACES DATE OF COOPER' S (AND MISS JOHNSON' S) PRESUMED DEATH AS ABOUT JANUARY 31, 1973. HE INVITES YOU TO WRITE HIM IF HE CAN PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION. IN VIEW OF LACK OF FIRM KNOWLEDGE ON DATE OF DEATH, EMBASSY BELIEVES DEATH COULD HAVE OCCURRED ANY TIME BETWEEN JANUARY 27 TH AND JANUARY 31 ST.

3. UNDER MENDOZA PROCEDURES, HOWEVER, A JUDGE MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT PRESUMPTIVE DEATH CERTIFICATE CAN BE ISSUED IN CASE OF MISSING MOUNTAIN CLIMBER, BUT JUDGE CAN DO SO ONLY AFTER ANOTHER EXPEDITION HAS REACHED PRESUMED SITE OF DISAPPEARANCE AND BROUGHT BACK WHATEVER EVIDENCE FOUND THERE. BODIES PRESUMABLY LOCATED ON PART OF MOUNTAIN MOST DIFFICULT TO REACH. SINCE THE TRAGEDY, NO EXPEDITION ABLE TO GET THERE AND AS YOU KNOW, OFFICIAL UNCLASSIFIED

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RECOVERY EFFORTS NOW SUSPENDED BECAUSE OF WINTER WEATHER CONDITIONS.

4. RECOVERY BY HELICOPTER OUT OF QUESTION BECAUSE DANGEROUS, HUNDRED- MILE- AN- HOUR, VIOLENTLY CHANGING CROSSWINDS IN VICINITY MOUNTAIN TOP.

5. ARRIETA HIMSELF, A SKILLED MOUNTAIN CLIMBER, INTENDS LEAD RECOVERY TEAM TO SITE WHEN SEVERE WEATHER ABATES IN DECEMBER, IF IT SAFE THEN.

6. COOPER' S GUIDE, MIGUEL A. ALFONSO, VIAMONTE 710, SAN JOSE GUAY- MALLEN, MENDOZA, HOWEVER, WILLING ORGANIZE SEARCH PARTY NOW, PROVIDED TEAM CAN START CLIMB SOON. ALFONSO POINTS OUT THAT SPRING THAWS COULD CAUSE AVALANCHES WHICH COULD SHIFT BODIES AND OTHER EVIDENCE TO SUCH EXTENT THAT BY DECEMBER NOTHING COULD BE LOCATED.

7. ALFONSO WILLING DONATE HIS SERVICES AND THAT OF SOME SEVEN COLLEAGUES FOR SEARCH, BUT WOULD REQUIRE ABOUT TWENTY THOUSAND PESOS FOR EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, A FIGURE WE UNDERSTAND NOT UNREASONABLE FOR EIGHT CLIMBERS. THIS ABOUT TWO THOUSAND US DOLLARS AT CURRENT OFFICIAL RATE. (IF COOPER' S BODY RECOVERED COST OF PREPARING AND SHIPPING BY AIR TO US WOULD BE ADDITIONAL, ABOUT SEVEN HUNDRED DOLLARS. CREMATION AT MENDOZA MAY BECOME POSSIBLE SOON COSTING, INCLUDING AIR SHIPMENT ASHES TO US, ABOUT SEVENTY DOLLARS.)

8. EMBASSY CAUTIONS, HOWEVER, THAT THERE CONSIDERABLE DOUBT THAT ALFONSO WOULD BE ABLE REACH BODIES IN MAY INASMUCH AS EARLIER RECOVERY ATTEMPTS, BEFORE WINTER SET IN, FAILED. ALFONSO ENJOYS GOOD REPUTATION AND CAN PROBABLY BE DEPENDED UPON TO DO HIS BEST TO RECOVER BODIES BUT IT VERY PROBABLE THAT EVEN WITH BEST OF INTENTIONS HE WOULD BE PREVENTED BY WEATHER FROM REACHING BODIES AFTER INVESTING FUNDS IN SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, EMBASSY BELIEVES YOU SHOULD BE INFORMED OF ALFONSO' S OFFER AND THEREFORE SENDS THIS TELEGRAM. EMBASSY OF COURSE IN NO POSITION ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR OR MONITOR ALFONSO' S PERFORMANCE ANY AGREEMENT YOU REACH WITH HIM.

9. EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT IF YOU NEVERTHELESS INTERESTED IN ALFONSO' S OFFER, YOU TELEGRAPH HIM DIRECTLY IN SPANISH OR ENGLISH (OR TELEGRAPH HIM TO TELEPHONE YOU COLLECT AND HAVE SOMEONE FLUENT UNCLASSIFIED

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IN SPANISH AT YOUR END OF LINE.) FUNDS CAN BE SENT HIM BY TELEGRAPHIC BANK TRANSFER TO FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK AT MENDOZA. SINCE CONSIDERABLE PLANNING INVOLVED, ALFONSO PREFERS GO- AHEAD SIGNAL FROM YOU SOON AS POSSIBLE, IN ANY CASE BEFORE MAY SEVENTEEN,

EVEN IF FUNDS COMING LATER.

10. EMBASSY CAUTIONS FURTHER THAT YOU MIGHT WISH HAVE WRITTEN STATEMENT FROM ALFONSO THAT HE UNDERTAKING CLIMB ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE AND THAT HE ASSUMING FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSSES, INJURIES, ETC. WE AIRMAILING YOU LIST OF ENGLISH- SPEAKING ATTORNEYS IN MENDOZA SHOULD YOU WISH LEGAL ASSISTANCE.

11. IF BODIES RECOVERED, WHETHER BY ALFONSO, BY ARRIETA OR BY OTHER EXPEDITION, ARRIETA WILL DISREGARD AL PREVIOUS DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS AND WILL ASK EMBASSY FOR CURRENT INSTRUCTIONS. EMBASSY HAS ON FILE YOUR WISH THAT COOPER BE RETURNED TO U. S. FOR BURIAL.

12. THIS MESSAGE BEING SENT BY AIRMAIL TO MR. COOPER' S WIFE AT SOUTH HOUSTON AND TO MISS JOHNSON' S MOTHER, MRS. VICTOR E. JOHNSON,
102 WEST DIAMOND LAKE ROAD, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55419.
AMEMBASSY
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA.
INTERESTED PARTY COLLECT.
LODGE

NOTE BY OC/ T: PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED
@@@OASYS@@@<CONCATENATED>

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
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